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# Food & Nutrition

October 1977 Volume 7 Number 5

## The New Food Stamp Legislation

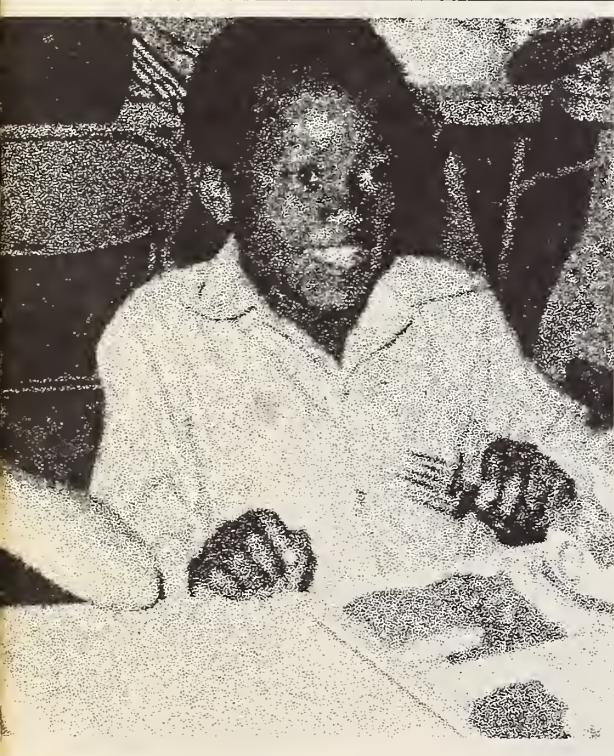
On September 29, President Carter signed into law the Food Stamp Act of 1977. The law makes major reforms in the Food Stamp Program, simplifying program administration and making it easier for eligible people to participate. **Page 2**

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## Lunch Patterns Proposed

USDA has proposed five new lunch patterns to update the Type A lunch pattern now used in the National School Lunch Program. The proposed patterns are designed to help schools more adequately meet the nutritional needs of children and to reduce plate waste. **Page 11**

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# The New Food Stamp Legislation

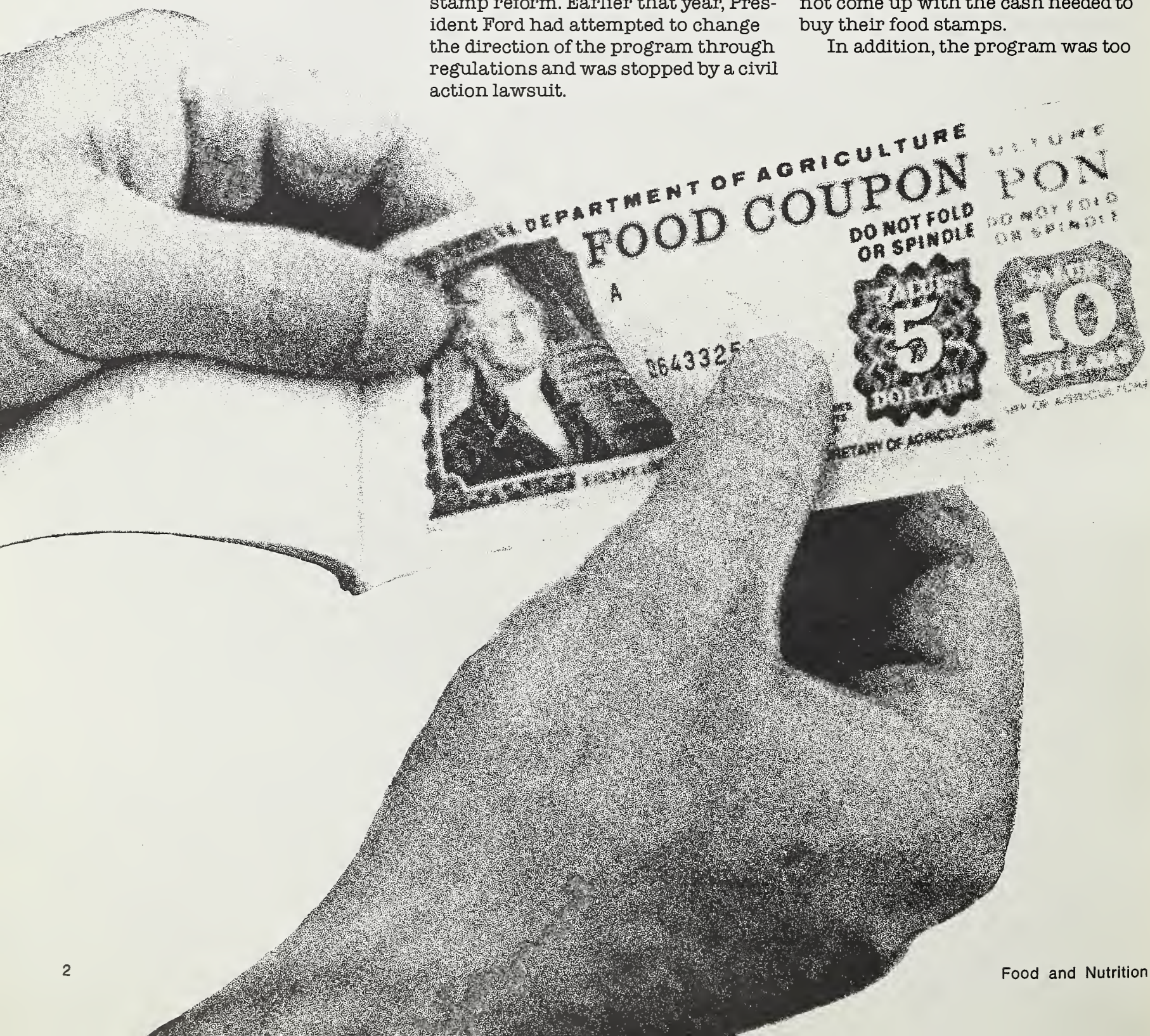
For years, public outcry and Congressional debate have focused on various shortcomings of the Food Stamp Program. As headlines proclaimed program abuses, pressures for reform of the program mounted.

In 1976, after months of debate, the Senate approved a major food stamp reform bill, but the House failed to act on the bill and the 94th Congress closed with no final action on food stamp reform. Earlier that year, President Ford had attempted to change the direction of the program through regulations and was stopped by a civil action lawsuit.

Against this background, many people continued to work for improvements in the program.

Primary among their concerns was the requirement that households purchase their food stamps. The purchase requirement was widely attacked as a barrier preventing needy people from getting the assistance they needed. Many low-income families, it was argued, simply could not come up with the cash needed to buy their food stamps.

In addition, the program was too





complex. The burdensome certification process was reminiscent of an itemized tax form, and its complexity led to errors and delays. The extensive list of itemized deductions made it difficult to place a clear limit on eligibility.

Finally, there were no incentives for States to pursue and prosecute fraud.

This year, a coalition of many anti-poverty organizations, advocacy groups, unions, and religious organizations joined together in support of a proposal submitted to Congress by President Carter.

Not surprisingly, the proposal proved to be as controversial as the program it was designed to reform. But constant throughout the controversy was the unchanging concern over the inequities of the purchase requirement and the complexities of the certification process.

On September 29, President Carter signed the bill into law, making major reforms in the program and extending authorization until 1981.

The most dramatic reform is the elimination of the purchase requirement, which is expected to extend benefits to an estimated 3 million needy people who were eligible under the old law but did not participate because of the purchase requirement.

Eliminating the purchase requirement will simplify program administration, reducing the amount of food stamps in circulation by \$3 billion and ending abuses by cash collection agencies.

The new law makes other changes which will reduce opportunities for abuse and make it easier for eligible people to apply and be certified for the program. These changes are explained in detail in the following pages.

**The new law will not go into effect immediately, and implementing it will involve the cooperative efforts of all the people who administer the Food Stamp Program. This fall and winter, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will be writing the regulations, or rules, for the new program. By next summer, State and local agencies will be operating under these new rules.**

In writing regulations for the new program, USDA wants to make sure its rules are administratively sound and will ensure effective service to those in need. To do this, the Department needs comments from the public, and particularly from food stamp participants. This fall, USDA is holding a nationwide series of public hearings to give people opportunities to make comments and offer suggestions.

Many provisions of the new program are spelled out in detail in the legislation and can, therefore, be changed only by Congress. However, there are other areas where USDA will have some flexibility in writing regulations. It is in these areas that the Department is especially interested in getting comments from the public. These areas are explained on page 8.



# Q&A Q&A Q&A

## Questions and answers

### **Q Who will be eligible for the new Food Stamp Program?**

**A** To qualify for food stamps, households must meet certain financial and non-financial criteria. The financial criteria include an income test.

Under the new program, the income test will be based on the Federal poverty guidelines set by the Office of Management and Budget. These levels are adjusted annually to reflect changes in the cost of living. For the period ending April 1978, the income poverty level for a family of four is \$5,850 a year.

To be eligible for the new program, a household must have a net income that falls below the income poverty level for that size household. Net income is the amount of income a household has after subtracting deductions.

Under the previous program, income limits were based on guidelines set by the Secretary of Agriculture. These limits were higher than the Federal poverty levels, and they did not apply to people who had no income other than public assistance or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). These people were automatically eligible.

The income limits for the new program will apply to everyone. No one will be automatically eligible.

### **Q What will be deducted from a household's total or "gross" monthly income?**

**A** Under the new program, there are three deductions:

**A standard deduction.** All households will get to subtract a standard

amount. This amount will be adjusted twice a year to reflect changes in the cost of living, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for items other than food. If the new law were currently in effect, the standard deduction would be \$60.

#### **An earned income deduction.**

Working households will also get to subtract 20 percent from their total monthly earned income. This is to make up for taxes and other mandatory deductions, like Social Security.

**A maximum deduction for actual dependent care and excess shelter costs.** Households will be able to claim a third deduction, if:

1. They have to pay someone to care for a dependent in order for a person in the household to accept a job, continue working, or take a training course leading to a job. This deduction covers actual costs for child care as well as care for incapacitated adults.

2. They are spending more than 50 percent of their net income — income after all the other deductions have been subtracted — on shelter costs. These households can deduct that portion of their shelter costs that is over 50 percent of their monthly net income. Shelter costs include rent, mortgage payments, utility payments, property taxes, and the cost of insurance on a home.

If the new law were currently in effect, a household could claim up to \$75 for dependent care and housing costs. In other words, households subtracting \$65 a month for dependent care could only deduct \$10 more for high shelter costs.

This maximum amount will be adjusted annually to reflect changes in the cost of shelter, fuel, and utilities.

### **Q Will there be limits to how much a household can have in "assets" or resources?**

**A** Yes. The new law will allow households to have assets up to \$1,750. Previously, \$1,500 was the limit.

This new limit will apply to all households, with the exception of households of two or more persons in which at least one person is over 60. In these households, the limit will remain at \$3,000.

For the first time, the assets limit will apply to households in which all members receive public assistance or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

In figuring a household's assets under the new program, any licensed vehicle with a Blue Book value of more than \$4,500 must be counted. This does not mean the household will have to apply the entire value of the car — only the value of the car over \$4,500. For example, a household owning a car valued at \$5,500 would have to apply \$1,000 to its total assets limit of \$1,750.

Previously, one licensed vehicle used for household transportation was not counted, regardless of its value. Also not counted were vehicles needed for transportation to work, and vehicles used to produce earned income, such as taxicabs.

Vehicles used to produce earned income will continue to be exempted under the new program. Houses and lots of average worth in the community, and certain other resources will also be exempted.



**Q Will the elimination of the purchase requirement mean that people now using food stamps will be getting the same number of stamps — they just won't have to pay for them?**

**A** No. It means that people will get only the "bonus value" of their food stamp allotment. Under the old program, people paid a certain amount of money, which was then returned to them in the form of food stamps, along with additional — or bonus — food stamps. Under the new program, people will no longer pay for their food stamps, but they will get only what used to be the bonus food stamps.

Some people, of course, will be getting a different amount of bonus stamps, but this will be because of

changes in the way income and benefits are calculated under the new Food Stamp Program.

**Q Will households have to have access to cooking facilities to get food stamps?**

**A** No. Households will no longer be required to have access to cooking facilities.

**Q What kind of requirements does the new law make about registering for work?**

**A** Persons physically and mentally fit and between the ages of 18 and 60 must register for work and satisfy job search requirements prescribed by the Secretary of Agriculture. A number of persons will be

exempt from this provision, including people caring for children under 12, people who are already working, and people in drug and alcohol treatment centers.

**Q What are the new pilot projects requiring people to work for food stamps?**

**A** The new law requires USDA to set up 14 pilot projects in which people will be required to work in exchange for their food stamps. They will work exclusively in State or local government jobs or in jobs sponsored primarily by CETA. No one will be required to work more than 40 hours per week, and the exact number of hours a person works will depend on the size of his or her food stamp allotment.

**Q What are the steps involved in figuring a family's net income, and, if they are eligible, their food stamp benefits?**

**A** Here is one example: the Halletts are a family of four with a monthly income that includes \$210 in earnings and a public assistance payment of \$207. Their expenses are \$180 for shelter costs and \$40 for child care.

## 1. First, figure the Halletts' adjusted income:

Total earned income is	\$210.00
Minus an earned income deduction of 20 percent	- 42.00
Equals net earned income	168.00
Adding all other income (public assistance payment)	+ 207.00
Equals	\$375.00
Minus the new \$60 standard deduction	- 60.00
Equals	315.00
Minus child care expenses	- 40.00
Equals adjusted income	\$275.00

## 2. Next, figure the Halletts' shelter deduction:

Their shelter costs are	\$180.00
Minus 50 percent of adjusted income	- 137.50
Equals "excess shelter expense" (amount of shelter costs over 50 percent of adjusted income)	\$42.50

Households are entitled to a dependent care/shelter deduction not to exceed \$75 a month. Because the Halletts have already taken a \$40 deduction for child care, they can claim only a \$35 shelter deduction.

## 3. Now figure the Halletts' net income:

Adjusted income equals	\$275.00
Minus the \$35 shelter deduction	- 35.00
Equals net income	\$240.00

Under the new program, a household of four can qualify if they have a monthly net income of no more than \$488. With a monthly net income of \$240, the Halletts are eligible.

## 4. To figure the Halletts' food stamp benefits:

Monthly stamp allotment for family of four	\$170.00
Minus 30 percent of net income (30 percent of \$240) This is the benefit reduction rate	- 72.00
The difference equals the Halletts' food stamp benefits (this amount used to be called the food stamp "bonus")	\$98.00

Under the old system, the Halletts would have paid a purchase requirement, which varied according to their deductions, to get a food stamp allotment of \$170. Under the new system, they pay nothing and simply receive \$98 in benefits.



# Q & A

## **Q Will students still be eligible for food stamps?**

**A** Yes, but the new law tightens requirements concerning students. Any student who is, or could be, properly claimed as a tax dependent by an ineligible household will be ineligible for food stamps. Previously, these students were ineligible only if their parents actually claimed them as dependents.

Most students are required to register to work 20 hours a week.

## **Q Will strikers still be eligible for food stamps?**

**A** Yes, if they meet the eligibility standards.

## **Q How will the new law affect Indians?**

**A** For Indians, there will be sweeping changes under the new Food Stamp Program. The Food Distribution and Food Stamp Program will be able to operate simultaneously on Indian reservations, and households will be able to choose to participate in either of the programs. Also, if a State agency cannot adequately administer the Food Stamp Program on reservations, Indian tribes can administer it, and USDA will be able to reimburse the tribes for administrative costs just as it now reimburses the States.

## **Highlights of program administration**

**Food stamp applications.** Application forms must be given to households on the same day they request them, and if a household wishes to submit its application the same day, it must be accepted.

USDA will be required to design a simplified national application form. USDA will give approval for a State to use State-designed forms only if the State has a combined public assistance/food stamp form, a computer system requiring use of a State form, or other serious problems which warrant use of a State form.

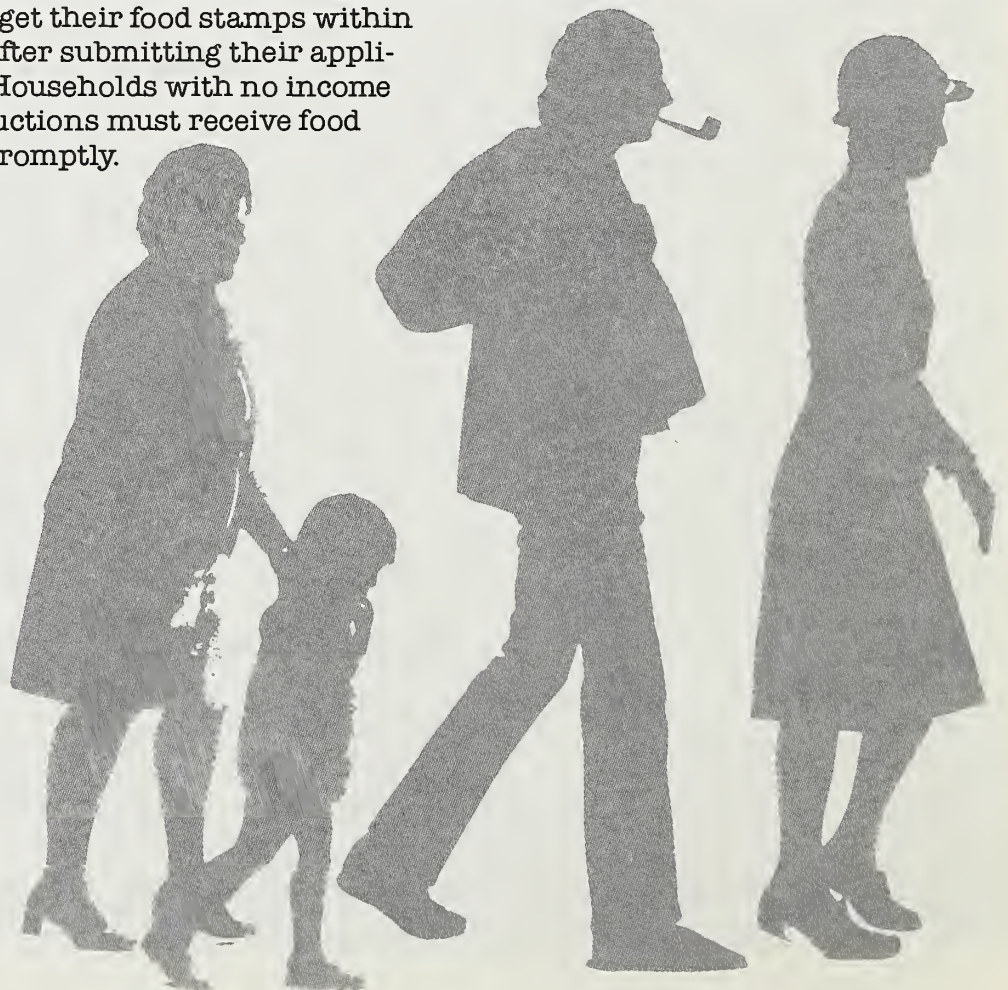
**Certification.** Eligible households must be certified and given the opportunity to get their food stamps within 30 days after submitting their applications. Households with no income after deductions must receive food stamps promptly.

**Certification periods.** Public assistance households will be assigned certification periods which coincide with the period of their public assistance grant. Households consisting entirely of unemployable, elderly or self-employed persons may be assigned up to 12-month certification periods.

All other households will be assigned certification periods of not less than 3 months, unless there is a likelihood of frequent changes in household circumstances, in which case shorter certification periods may be assigned.

States must notify households 30 days before the end of their certification period.

**Points and hours of certification and issuance.** Under the new law, USDA must set standards for locations and hours of operation of food stamp certification and issuance offices. USDA must also set standards





for States to use in certifying people who cannot come to the certification office to apply because of age, disability or transportation problems. These standards will specify use of mails, telephone interviews, and/or home visits.

**Joint USDA-HEW interview.** HEW and USDA will develop a system so that a single interview will be conducted to determine eligibility for food stamps and AFDC.

**Staffing standards.** The new law requires USDA to set standards for the maximum number of cases an eligibility worker can handle efficiently. The law specifies that eligibility workers will be hired according to U.S. Civil Service standards, and that State agencies will have responsibility for the continuing and comprehensive training of these workers. The law also calls for bilingual eligibility workers to be hired in localities with

significant percentages of non-English speaking people.

**Categorical eligibility.** The new program ends categorical eligibility. Previously, households were automatically eligible if all household members received welfare or Supplemental Security Income.

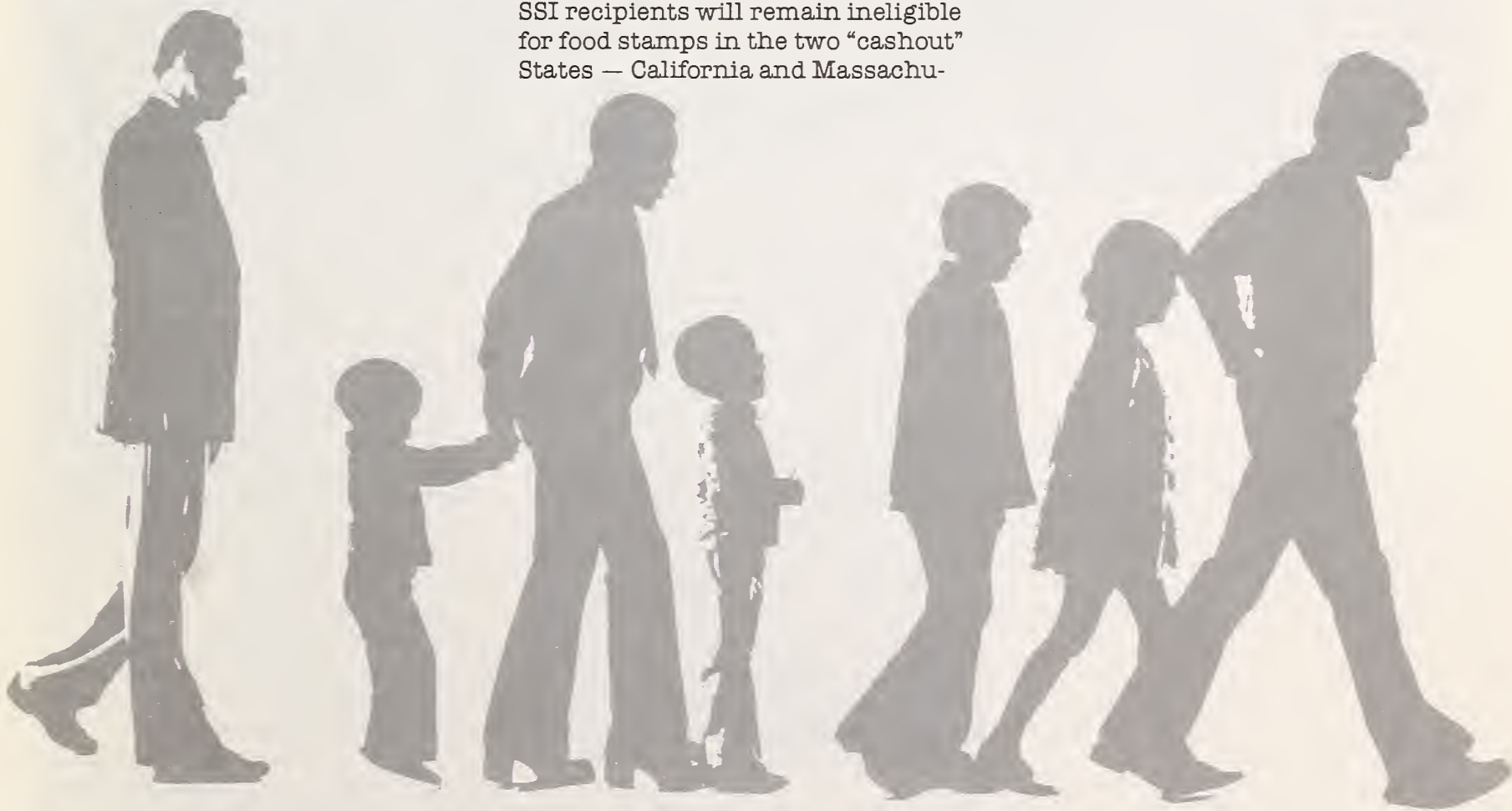
**Supplemental Security Income.** SSI recipients will be required to satisfy the same eligibility standards as all food stamp recipients. Previously, they were automatically eligible. However, SSI recipients will continue to be exempt from the work registration requirement.

SSI recipients will be able to apply for food stamps at the Social Security Office when they apply for SSI, and information collected for SSI will be used to help determine food stamp eligibility. States will be required to keep SSI recipients informed of food stamp eligibility rules and benefits. SSI recipients will remain ineligible for food stamps in the two "cashout" States — California and Massachu-

setts — where SSI recipients receive a larger SSI payment instead of food stamps.

**Outreach.** The new law deletes the wording of the previous law requiring States to "insure the participation of eligible households." This language contributed to a 1974 court decision forcing USDA to issue specific and binding outreach instructions to the States. The new law requires States to inform low-income people — including those receiving public assistance, unemployment compensation and SSI — about the availability of food stamps.

**Nutrition education.** Under the new program, USDA must develop materials to help people with low reading levels understand the rela-





tionship between diet and health and how to buy and prepare nutritious, economical meals.

**Sanctions.** Federal funds for administrative costs will be withheld from states failing to meet program standards without good cause. A State may be required to pay for food stamps improperly issued if the State has been negligent or has committed fraud. USDA will no longer have to establish a gross negligence charge before billing a State.

**Incentives.** The Federal Government will pay an additional 10 percent of States' administrative costs if they reduce their overall error rates to below 5 percent. In addition, these States will not have to submit corrective action plans relating to error rates.

**Fraud.** The law increases Federal reimbursements to States from 50 percent to a minimum of 75 percent of costs incurred in investigating and prosecuting fraud. People found guilty of fraud by an administrative hearing will be dropped from the program for 3 months. People found guilty by courts will be dropped from 6 to 24 months.

## USDA holds public hearings; your comments are invited

To get the benefit of public thinking before writing regulations, USDA is holding public hearings throughout the country this October. These hearings will be held in seven major cities: Boston, Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Baltimore. A special hearing devoted to the problems of migrants will take place in Fresno, California. And 10 additional hearings will give people in rural areas opportunities to comment.

USDA is also interested in receiving written comments. Comments should be sent to Nancy Snyder, Director, Food Stamp Division, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Some of the most important issues on which USDA will be seeking comment include:

- **Job search requirements.** What kind of job search should be required? Should there be different requirements for people in areas of high unemployment? How should job search be verified? Who should run the job search provision?
- **Access.** What are the best locations and hours for sites where people can apply and be certified for food stamps? How can it be made easier for elderly and disabled people to apply for food stamps?
- **The pilot work projects.** How can USDA best set up the 14 pilot projects in which people will work in exchange for food stamps?
- **Nutrition education.** What methods of nutrition education actually change people's eating habits?
- **Outreach.** How should USDA evaluate State outreach efforts? Should specific types of outreach, such as toll-free lines, be mandated?

• **Indians.** Under what circumstances should program administration be turned over to Indian tribal organizations? How can USDA determine whether or not a tribal organization can effectively administer the Food Stamp Program?

• **State eligibility workers.** What should be the maximum caseload for employees certifying people for food stamps? How should these employees be trained? In which areas should these people be bilingual?

• **State agency penalties.** What criteria should USDA establish for penalizing States that fail to meet program standards and requirements or that improperly certify households?

## Food stamp history: A summary

Today's Food Stamp Program stems from the food assistance programs of the Great Depression — a time when farmers were burdened with foods they couldn't sell, while thousands stood in breadlines, waiting for something to eat. To help both farmers and consumers, the Federal Government began distributing surplus foods to the Nation's hungry people.

By the late 1930's, the Department was using an alternative approach known as the Food Stamp Plan. Under this plan, families exchanged money for stamps of equal value to purchase regular food items. They also received additional stamps to buy designated surplus foods at retail stores. First used in Rochester, New York, the Food Stamp Plan later expanded to 1,700 counties and 88 cities.

The program ended in 1943 as World War II reduced food surpluses and unemployment. At its peak, however, the Food Stamp Plan served well over 3 million people a month.

Because of a depressed economy in the mid 1950's, some areas decided to reestablish systems for distributing





surplus foods to needy people, and interest in the food stamp program revived.

On January 21, 1961, President Kennedy directed USDA to establish a new pilot food stamp program. By August 1964, the pilot program was operating in 43 project areas and reaching over 350,000 people.



Taken on December 25, 1931, this United Press International photo shows people waiting in line for food in New York City.

In December 1962, a North Carolina family takes part in the pilot stamp program.



The Food Stamp Act of 1964 established the Food Stamp Program as a permanent program and authorized expansion to States wishing to take part. During the following years, USDA undertook a campaign to bring some form of food assistance — direct food distribution or food stamps — to every county in the country.

At the same time, public awareness and concern about the food problems of the poor focused national attention on the food assistance programs. This concern culminated in a national commitment to end poverty-related hunger and malnutrition. In 1969, Congress greatly increased appropriations available to the Food Stamp Program. USDA continued to encourage program expansion, and by the end of 1970, only 39 areas were

without either food distribution or food stamps.

In 1971, Congress established uniform national standards of eligibility and required all States to inform low-income people about the availability of food stamps.

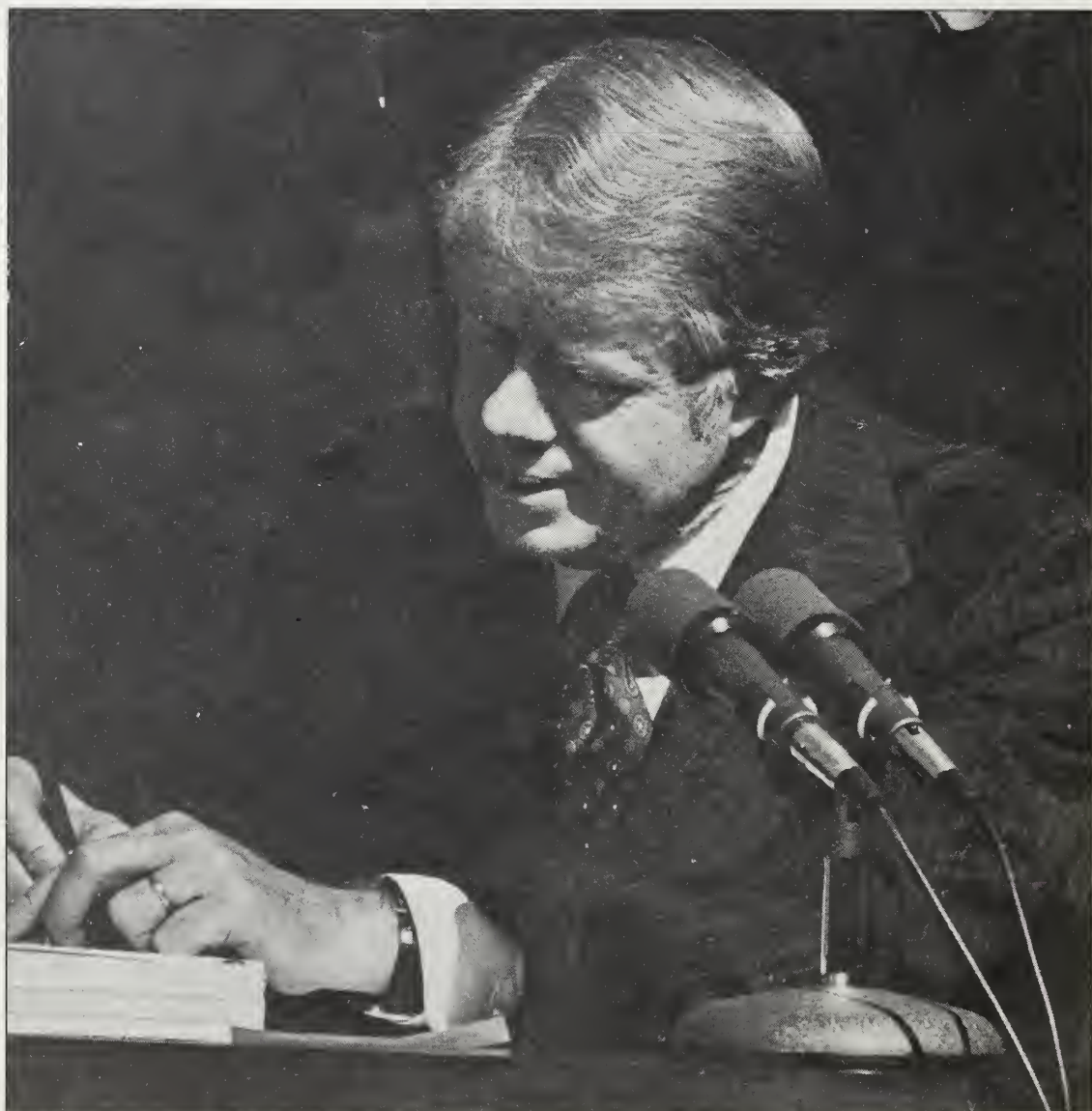
In 1974, the Food Stamp Program finally went nationwide. Congress required all States to offer food stamps to the poor. Since then, program growth has been rapid, reaching a peak of 19.3 million in May 1975, primarily because of high unemployment and recession. As the economy began to recover in 1976 and 1977, food stamp rolls declined. Today, the program is serving 16 million people in the 50 States, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

by Dianne D. Jenkins



President John F. Kennedy establishes the pilot food stamp program in 1961.

President Jimmy Carter signs the Food Stamp Act of 1977.





# Lunch Patterns Proposed

On September 6, Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland proposed five new lunch patterns to update the Type A lunch pattern now used in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

The proposed lunch patterns would make school lunches more accurately meet the nutritional needs of children of varying ages. They would also bring the lunch requirements into conformance with the 1974 revisions of the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA), published by the National Academy of Sciences.

**"These proposed regulations represent a major step in the Department's efforts to help schools more adequately meet the nutritional needs of children and to reduce plate waste,"** Secretary Bergland said, explaining the reason for the change.

**"We want to offer our students meals that are the most appealing and the most acceptable to them within a sound nutritional framework, and we intend to operate the school lunch program as efficiently as possible."**

## What are meal patterns?

Since the National School Lunch Program began in 1946, USDA has provided schools with meal patterns to use in preparing and serving school lunches.

Although there have been changes in the patterns at different times in the program's history, the purpose of the patterns has remained the same: to tell school food service staffs what they must do in order to serve lunches that meet National School Lunch Program requirements. Based on periodic reviews conducted by the Agricultural Research Service, the patterns specify the types and amounts of food schools must include in each lunch.

Over the years, the lunch patterns have provided a flexible framework that has allowed school lunch managers to choose from a wide variety of foods in planning and serving nutritious, tasty meals. This flexibility has allowed them to plan menus that reflect regional, cultural, and ethnic food practices.

While designed primarily to help schools serve nutritious, well-balanced meals, the patterns also have been the basis for teaching children about good eating habits.

## Originally three patterns used

Originally, the National School Lunch Program used three meal patterns: Type A, Type B, and Type C. The

Type A was designed to provide one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances as specified in 1943. Type B was designed to provide a supplementary lunch in schools without facilities to prepare Type A lunches. And Type C was designed to provide a supplement of  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of whole milk.

By the late 1960's, the program was no longer using the Type B and Type C patterns, and currently all 93,000 participating schools use the Type A pattern exclusively.

The Type A pattern instructs schools to include in each lunch:

- **One half pint of fluid milk.**
- **Two ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish; or 2 ounces of cheese; or one egg; or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of cooked dry beans or peas; or 4 tablespoons of**

## National School Lunch Program Current Requirements and Recommendations

	Elementary School 6-10	10-12	Secondary School 12-18
Meat and/or Alternate	2 ounces	2 ounces	3 ounces
Vegetable and/or Fruit	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup	1 to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups
Bread	1 slice	1 slice	1 to 3 slices
Fluid Milk	$\frac{1}{2}$ pint	$\frac{1}{2}$ pint	$\frac{1}{2}$ pint
Type A Pattern Requirements			



**peanut butter; or an equivalent quantity of any combination of these.**

- **Three-fourths cup of two or more vegetables or fruits, or both.**
- **One slice of whole grain or enriched bread, or an acceptable bread alternate.**

#### **Current pattern reflects changes**

In its present form, the Type A pattern reflects many revisions made during the last 30 years. In most cases, the revisions are the result of new knowledge — knowledge about the nutritive value of foods, about food consumption, and about the food preferences of children.

Several of these revisions have

been major changes, but none has altered the essential framework of the Type A pattern.

For example, in 1958, a change called for the meat or meat alternate requirement to be served in the main dish, or in the main dish and one other menu item. Another change that year called for schools to serve two or more vegetables or fruits, or a combination of both. The revision further limited the amount of full-strength vegetable juice schools could serve to meet the fruit/vegetable requirement. Now, a serving of  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup or more of full-strength juice meets only one-third of this requirement.

Guidelines issued in 1963 placed more emphasis on serving vitamins A, C, and iron, and changed the reference for the pattern from the 9- to

12-year-old child to the 10- to 12-year-old boy and girl. Guidelines issued in 1971 recommended the amount of food to meet the nutritional needs of children of specified ages.

A 1969 revision reduced the butter or margarine requirement from 2 teaspoons to 1 teaspoon. A 1976 change eliminated the butter or margarine requirement altogether.

In 1973, the program authorized all types of fluid milk — until then only whole milk had been acceptable.

Changes in 1971 and 1974 expanded the meat and meat alternate definition to include textured vegetable protein products, enriched macaroni with fortified protein, and cheese alternate products. In 1974 guidelines defined and expanded bread and bread alternates to include a greater variety of bread and to ensure uniform interpretation of creditable items.

The most recent changes came in 1976. A result of the child nutrition legislation of October 1975, one change initiated a new choice system in senior high schools. Aimed at reducing waste, the new system allows senior high school students to select as few as three of the five food items included in the Type A lunch. Students must select three different food items, however, and they still must pay for the entire meal — an incentive for them to take all five items.

#### **The new proposals**

The proposed new lunch patterns offer the most significant changes ever made within the framework of the Type A pattern. The new patterns:

- **Specify minimum quantities of food for five separate age groups:** Group I (preschool) — ages 1 and 2; Group II (kindergarten) — ages 3, 4, and 5; Group III (grades 1 through 3) — ages 6, 7, and 8; Group IV (grades 4 through 6) — ages 9, 10, and 11; Group V (grades 7 through 12) — ages 12 and up.

<b>National School Lunch Program Proposed Requirements</b>			
	Elementary School Age 6-9		Secondary School 12 and over
<b>Meat and/or Alternate</b>	<b>1½ ounces</b>	<b>2 ounces</b>	<b>3 ounces</b>
<b>Vegetable and/or Fruit (at least 2 kinds)</b>	<b>½ cup</b>	<b>¾ cup</b>	<b>¾ cup</b>
<b>Bread and/or Alternate</b>	<b>8 servings per week</b>	<b>8 servings per week</b>	<b>10 servings per week</b>
<b>Fluid Milk</b>	<b>¾ cup</b>	<b>½ pint</b>	<b>½ pint</b>



• **Require schools to serve lunch to preschool children, ages 1 through 5, in two different service periods.** Knowledge of the eating habits of this age group indicates that these children may have difficulty consuming the required one-third of the RDA at one sitting. To allow optimum flexibility, the decision on how the food is divided between the two sittings is to be made at the local level.

• **Allow children age 12 or older to request smaller portion sizes of the foods in a lunch.** This is expected to help reduce plate waste.

• **Expand the bread alternates to include enriched or whole-grain rice, macaroni, noodles and other pasta products.** In addition, the proposals also stipulate the number of bread or bread alternates to be served on a weekly rather than a daily basis. This gives menu planners more flexibility.

The proposals also specify that:

• A serving of dry beans and peas or peanut butter can be used to meet no more than one-half of the meat/meat alternate requirement for all children.

• Eggs may be used to meet the full meat/meat alternate requirement for children ages 1 and 2 years, but they may be used to meet only one-half of the meat/meat alternate requirement for children ages 3 and above.

• In addition to whole milk, or any flavored milk, schools must make available to students unflavored low-fat milk, skim milk or buttermilk.

In the proposed regulations, USDA makes five recommendations to help schools plan highly nutritious meals: **1.** Include a vitamin A vegetable or fruit at least twice a week; **2.** Include a vitamin C vegetable or fruit several times a week; **3.** Use no more than 3 eggs per week as a meat alternate,

or in preparing other foods; **4.** Include several foods for iron each day; **5.** Keep fat, sugar, and salt at moderate levels.

In June, USDA will publish guidance materials that will explain these recommendations in more detail.

### **Monitoring on a weekly basis**

The proposed regulations call for schools to continue planning lunches to meet the daily components. However, to give schools more flexibility, the regulations restructure the monitoring of lunch requirements from a daily to a weekly basis. Under the new monitoring system, States would determine whether meals, served over a week's time, meet the total quantities of food specified for





each age group.

The regulations also direct schools to serve all required foods each day. When occasionally they cannot meet all the requirements in a particular meal, they should make up for it later in the week by serving extra foods from that component.

### Effect on plate waste

The new regulations propose several changes which should help schools reduce plate waste.

The most significant of these is the change in serving sizes. Under the current Type A pattern, the kinds and amounts of foods specified are minimum amounts to serve 10- to 12-year-old children. While current regulations encourage schools to accom-

modate portion sizes to the appetites and ages of children of various age levels, many schools have not offered different serving sizes.

As a result, younger children often get too much food, and older children complain they get too little. Because the proposed meal patterns define portion sizes for children of five separate age groups, younger children would receive smaller servings and older children would receive larger servings.

A second important change allows all students in Group V — students age 12 and older — to accept smaller portion sizes of the required lunch components.

In senior high schools, students already have the option of taking three, four, or five food items. This

change would give them the additional choice of taking smaller portions of the food items they select. Junior high school students would still be required to accept all five food items. However, they would be able to select smaller portion sizes than those offered.

### Student involvement

The proposed regulations encourage local schools to use the lunch program in teaching good eating habits.

The regulations would require schools to involve students in the lunch program by encouraging them to take part in menu planning, in efforts to improve the lunchroom, and in activities to promote the school lunch program in the local commun-



## National School Lunch Program Effect of Changes in Proposed Pattern

Current Type A Pattern	Changes	Results
(1) One required lunch pattern with <i>recommendations</i> for various age groups.	Lunch patterns <i>required</i> for various age groups.	Makes portion sizes more suitable for each age group.
(2) Based on Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) and dietary consumption data that are out of date.	Reflects changes in dietary consumption habits and most recent RDA (1974).	Establishes minimum serving sizes designed to meet the nutritional goal.
(3) Bread requirement specified on daily basis.	Bread/bread alternate requirement specified on a weekly basis. Now can include rice and pasta.	Increases menu flexibility; reflects food preferences and cultural habits.
(4) All students <i>required</i> to accept minimum portion sizes.	Children 12 years and older <i>may take</i> smaller portion sizes.	Minimizes plate waste; increases child's independence in food selection.



ity. Schools would also encourage parents, teachers and communities to participate in these activities.

Where schools have a high degree of plate waste, or where students routinely reject particular foods or routinely choose less than all five food items in the lunch, schools would be required to develop and carry out actions to improve the quality of the food and the food service. They would involve students in this process.

### **Testing follows comment period**

USDA welcomes comments on the proposed regulations from all interested persons, including students, parents, teachers, and others. The proposals appeared in complete form in the Federal Register September 9.

Comments are due by October 25.

After the initial comment period, the Department will issue interim regulations, which will be tested on a pilot basis from January 1978 through April 1978. Schools authorized to take part in the field testing will comply with all the provisions of the interim regulations.

During the field testing, USDA will continue to accept and consider public comments on the interim regulations. However, all comments must be in by May 15. Regulations are scheduled for final publication in June 1978, and in September 1978 they will become mandatory in all schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.

by Michael McAteer





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